

ORM NEWS

From the Office of the
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Resolution Management
Department of Veterans Affairs



January 2004

From the Deputy Assistant Secretary



Reaching Our Goals

I hope you and your families had a wonderful holiday season and that you have a great 2004, both personally and professionally. Last year, we met the performance goals of 30 days or less for counseling without ADR and 90 days or less with ADR. We also completed investigations with amendments and consolidations in 360 days or less. While these accomplishments are significant, there's more work to be done.

The one major goal that we did not reach, but **MUST** in 2004, is completing un-amended and consolidated investigations in 180 days or less. This will require the combined effort of everyone involved in complaint processing. To achieve this, counseling must be done in 30 days or less and procedural decisions must be timely. This will leave sufficient time for the completion of high quality and timely (less than 180 day) investigations. The Secretary has established this as a goal for VA and it's one that we can and must accomplish.

We are also placing more emphasis on using mediation to resolve complaints in as many cases as possible. I believe that the resolution of disputes by the involved parties is the best possible solution.

We are stepping up our efforts to encourage the use of mediation throughout the complaint process. We need to be sure the parties to the dispute understand mediation and its value. This will help reduce the number of complaints that enter the formal complaint process and the number of investigations we must conduct.

Doing more to help the involved parties resolve disputes earlier in the process will result in fewer complaints to be processed. This will require collaboration, teamwork, and support of each other to achieve these goals.

James S. Jones

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Program Highlights

Leadership VA Class of 2004 Announced

Charlotte Jones, Enterprise Manager, has been selected, along with 70 other VA employees, to participate in the Leadership VA (LVA) Class of 2004. Congratulations Charlotte. ■

Gordon H. Mansfield Named VA's Acting Deputy Secretary

President Bush appointed Gordon H. Mansfield as the acting Deputy Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in December 2003. Mr. Mansfield previously served as VA's assistant secretary for congressional and legislative affairs. Before joining VA in August 2001, he was the executive director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and an assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. ■



Williams v. Department of Veterans Affairs

The following is an excerpt from the *DIGEST of Equal Employment Opportunity Law* Volume XIV, No. 4, Fall Quarter 2003.

Complainant Entitled to a Hearing in the Absence of Evidence That She Received the Proper Notice.

In this case, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission vacated the Final Agency Decision's finding of no discrimination and remanded the matter for a hearing in the absence of evidence that the complainant received the investigative file or was notified of the right to request a hearing, in accordance with 29 C.F.R. Section 1614.108(f). Complainant claimed that she wanted a hearing and was misinformed about the process for requesting a hearing before an AJ. *Williams v. Department of Veterans Affairs*, EEOC Appeal No. 01A21667 (April 14, 2003). ■

Travel Tips

Following these tips will help you reduce your wait time at airport security checkpoints.

Before the Airport

Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. Refrain from taking wrapped presents to the airport.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is recommending that you either ship wrapped packages ahead of time or wrap on arrival. If the package alarms, TSA will need to unwrap it to investigate the source of the alarm.



- ❑ **Avoid wearing shoes, clothing, jewelry, and accessories that contain metal.** Metal items may set off the alarm on the metal detector.
- ❑ **Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage.** Checked baggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film.
- ❑ **Carry-on baggage is limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item.** Personal items include laptops, purses, small backpacks, briefcases, or camera cases. Remember, 1+1.
- ❑ **Place identification tags in and on all of your baggage. Don't forget to label your laptop computer.** These are one of the most forgotten items at Screening Checkpoints.

At the Airport

- ❑ **Put metal IN your carry-on bag.** This includes jewelry, loose change, keys, mobile phones, pagers, and personal data assistants (PDA's).
- ❑ **Take OUT your laptop computer.** Place it in a bin, separate from its carrying case.
- ❑ **Take OFF your outer coat.** Place it in a bin. Suit jackets and blazers do not have to be removed, unless requested by the screener.

Source is the Transportation Security Administration. ■

New POV Rates for 2004



The following changes in privately owned vehicle (POV) rates are effective for travel on and after January 1, 2004.

1. The reimbursement rates when the use of a POV is authorized as advantageous to the government are:
 - ❑ Privately owned automobile rate increased from 36 cents per mile to 37.5 cents per mile.
 - ❑ Privately owned motorcycle rate increased from 27.5 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile.
 - ❑ Privately owned aircraft rate increased from 95.5 cents per mile to 99.5 cents per mile.
2. The reimbursement rate for the use of a POV when a government vehicle is authorized as the mode of transportation decreased from 28 cents to 27 cents per mile.
3. The reimbursement rate for the use of a POV when a government vehicle is authorized as the mode of transportation and the traveler has signed a mandatory use agreement remains the same at 10.5 cents per mile.

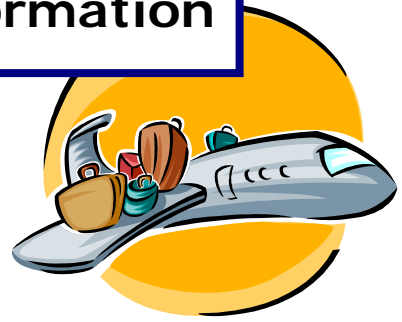
Contact Barbara Scott at (202) 501-2817 for more information. ■

Important Information about Travel Reimbursement Claims

Employees believe that if they fill out the Financial Summary page in their Zegato profile, that reimbursement funds will go to the correct banking institution. In reality, each employee must complete, *SF 3881, ACH Vendor/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form*, to have the correct information recorded in his or her file with the Austin Financial Services Center (FSC) Travel Section. Please note – this form must be filled out regardless of the banking information provided to payroll.

Contact Barbara Scott at (202) 501-2817 for more information.

Contract Carrier Flight Information



- ❑ **Q. Are there any limits on the travel arrangements I can make?**
A. Yes, if the GSA city-pair fare contract for passenger transportation services is available to you, you must use a contract carrier.
- ❑ **Use of a non-contract fare** – You may use a non-contract fare such as a through fare, special fare, commutation fare, excursion fare or reduced-rate round-trip fare in the following circumstances:
 - Your agency determines prior to your travel that this type of service is practical and economical to the Government; and
 - In the case of a fare that is restricted or has specific eligibility requirements and you know or reasonably can anticipate, based on your planned travel, that you will use the ticket.
- ❑ **Liability** – You are responsible for any additional costs that result from the use of an unauthorized travel agent or travel management system, including any penalties and fees your agency may impose. Use authorized travel agents, travel management systems, and contract carrier flights to avoid these additional costs, penalties, and fees.
- ❑ **Cost Savings** – The City Pair Program offers highly discounted unrestricted fares and the Capacity Controlled Fare program offers an even deeper discount. Capacity Controlled fares are available with limited seating and no restrictions. If your travel plans are uncertain (may involve last minute changes), then it's best to book the City Pair Program fare. The differential between the two programs is \$46.
- ❑ **One last tidbit** – When booking online flight reservations in Zegato, you can send a message to the Agent asking for a different flight time, than those listed, that may be more conducive to your needs? The agent can assist you in locating contract flights that may be not listed.

Contact Barbara Scott at (202) 501-2817 for more information. ■



Office Notes

Washington Field Office – Mid-Atlantic Operations

Thomas (Tom) Maddux has been selected as the Administrative Officer for the Washington Field Office (Mid-Atlantic Operations).

Tom – a former EEO counselor, investigator, and intake specialist

– brings a wealth of experience to this position. Please join us in congratulating Tom on his selection.

Employees of the Washington Field Office held a Christmas drive –collecting clothes, toys, and food for a family of five. They also donated hats, gloves, and socks to the homeless during the holiday season.

Thanks to everyone who donated leave on behalf of **Anthony Metcalf** who is currently recovering from brain surgery. Anthony will remain on medical leave until February 2004. Contact Esther Scott, HR, Topeka, Kansas If you would like to donate leave to cover Anthony's extended period of convalescence. Submit completed VA Form 0239, Leave Transfer Authorization, to Ms. Scott for processing. Her telephone number is 1-800-414-5272 and her fax # is (785) 440-8610.

Little Rock Field Office – Mid-South Operations

David Woodyly, EEO Intake Specialist, participated in the Volunteers In Public Schools (VIPS) by reading to 5th grade students at the Meadowcliff Elementary School, Conway, AR on Tuesday, November 18, 2003.

The University of Conway (UCA) Boxing Team, coached by **William Suddeth**, EEO Intake Specialist, recently competed in the "Fight For Humanity" fundraiser held on the UCA campus. **Austin Lewis**, Regional Officer, presented medals to some of the winners in the ring. The proceeds from this event went to the Conway Human Development Center (CHDC). CHDC is a facility assisting people with mental and physical disabilities.

Staff members sponsored a day at the Arts for students at Boone Park Elementary School on December 18, 2003. Eighteen students in grade K-5 were treated to a musical production of "Cinderella" and a trip to McDonald's for lunch. The kids enjoyed it and for several students it was their first trip to McDonalds.

On December 19, 2003, Little Rock staff members donated Christmas gifts to two families from Boone Park Elementary School who were not selected from the Angel Tree sponsored by a local shopping mall. All items from their wish list were provided, along with something special for each mother.

Office Notes – continued:

ITS

Reginald A. Ware, ITS Manager, and **Kevin T. Thomas**, Telecommunications Specialist, have successfully completed the Project Management training program and received a Master's Certificate in Project Management from the George Washington University School of Business and Public Management. The seven courses, completed in less than a year, are the equivalent to an Associate Degree. Kevin and Reggie successfully met the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirement that VA project managers receive project management certifications. Congratulations to Reggie and Kevin.

Cleveland Field Office – Great Lakes Operations

Technical Sergeant **Amanda S. Mitchell**, U.S. Air Force Reserve (the daughter of **Allen Mitchell** of the Detroit Satellite Office) was awarded the *Army Commendation Medal* on December 15, 2003, for her service as an Arabic linguist, field interviewer, and cultural advisor in Iraq. Amanda also received the *Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Intelligence Mobilization Augmentee of the Year Award* on December 12, 2003.

Did You Know?



Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program

The Federal Government is pleased to sponsor the *Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)*.

There are many advantages to the FLTCIP, including:

- ❑ It is the only long-term care insurance program sponsored by the Federal Government.
- ❑ It is backed by the financial strength and stability of John Hancock Life Insurance Company and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.
- ❑ It has competitive group rates and excellent inflation protection options.
- ❑ Certified Long Term Care Insurance Consultants (who do not work on commission) are available to help you with your decision.

Additional information is avail at www.LTCFEDS.com/email. ■

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE

The Department of Veterans Affairs joined the Nation in observing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 75th birthday anniversary on January 19, 2004.



The national theme was "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not a Day Off!" Dr. King was a powerful, persuasive speaker. In his "drum major instinct" sermon delivered in February of 1968, he said, "Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was drum major for justice. Say that I was a drum major for peace. I was a drum major for righteousness." VA is in a position to continue Dr. King's legacy of helping others by being "drum majors" for America's veterans. Our military veterans and their families are our

highest priority, and the people who serve them our most treasured resource. So we must ensure that equal opportunity is carried out through the hiring, promotion, and advancement of our diverse workforce. For further information on VA's Black Special Emphasis Program, contact National Program Manager Wanda J. Jones at 202-501-2089 or e-mail her at wanda.jones@mail.va.gov.

ORM NEWS is a monthly publication of the Office of Resolution Management (ORM). Contact Terry Washington, External Affairs Program, by e-mail or by calling (202) 501-2800 concerning the contents of this newsletter. Back copies of the newsletter can be found on our Web site at

www.va.gov/orm